

(1) India, Australia...

(DFAT) has supported a short course on mining governance for Afghan civil servants in India the first phase of which took place from 14-24 January 2019 and the second phase which is taking place this week in Kolkata and Dhanbad.

Following India's endorsement of the trilateral training proposal, which supports a priority recommendation of Australia's India Economic Strategy to 2035, the course was delivered by the Indian School of Mines (ISM) and a consortium of Australian academic institutions. The training successfully provided Afghan officials with best practice in mining governance and showcased Australian and Indian expertise.

In the past, India and the US have assisted Afghan businesses to promote their products. Russia has expressed interest in collaborating with India for joint projects in Afghanistan. While India has no intentions to put boots on the ground in Afghanistan, its soft power and development aid, including support for cricket, has earned huge goodwill.

Mining in Afghanistan remains largely untapped in the absence of transport corridors and infrastructure and the threat of terrorism. The few major deals that have been signed, including the vast Mes Aynak copper project with China's state-run China Metallurgical Group Corp., have so far remained largely inactive.

In April, Afghanistan launched tenders for natural resource projects as part of a global initiative to attract investments to its mineral sector, which has assets estimated to be worth \$1 trillion. The tenders cover a wide range of commodities including oil and gas, gemstones, copper, gold and marble. (Pajhwok)

(2) Facilitating ...

between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. The workshop educated participants on how to gain market access by leveraging World Trade Organization (WTO) membership; the importance of transparent government procurement processes for foreign direct investment; ways to speed up shipments and reduce costs for regional cross-border trade; and how to promote cross-border trade. Presentations and panel discussions were led by representatives from the European Union, WTO, the International Trade Centre, and the International Road Transport Union. Participants included over 30 Afghan government officials, 65 Afghan private sector companies, and prominent members of the Uzbek Customs Committee and the Uzbekistan Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade. (PR)

(3) Afghan Finance ...

technologies, and exchanged views on the implementation of joint projects in these areas.

The Afghan minister arrived in Baku to attend the first meeting of the joint working group on economic cooperation between the governments of Azerbaijan and Afghanistan. (Trend)

(4) US Contributes ...

"We expect all candidates, whether they are currently in government positions or not, to refrain from trying to use government resources -- money, the power to appoint people or simply going about their business in ways that are intended to benefit their campaign.

"We expect to see everyone respect Afghan law, and we expect that because the Afghan people expect that," Bass said

The envoy noted it was quite important that the electoral commission be communicating with the public about its activities.

The Afghan public should understand the preparations that were underway and that progress was being made to prepare for the important elections, the ambassador said. (Pajhwok)

(5) Pakistan-US...

and representatives of the Afghan Taliban to find a political settlement to the 18-year-old Afghan war, the longest U.S. foreign military intervention. Islamabad takes credit for arranging the U.S.-Taliban talks that started nearly a year ago.

"Pakistan has welcomed President Trump's farsighted decision to pursue a political solution in Afghanistan, which

in fact was an endorsement of our own position espoused for a long time," Qureshi told a seminar in Islamabad.

Qureshi insisted his government has been facilitating the U.S.-Taliban talks in "good faith" and as a "shared responsibility" to promote regional peace and security.

"The convergence in Pakistan and U.S. polices on Afghanistan has rekindled hope for resolution of the protracted Afghan conflict that has only brought misery and despondency to the region," the foreign minister stressed.

Qureshi said that besides the "one-on-one" interaction between Trump and Khan, "there will be a restrictive meeting" where the Pakistani political and military leadership will engage with U.S. counterparts before the extended delegation-level talks are held.

Pakistani military chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and the head of the country's spy agency will both accompany Khan during the visit, officials said. (VoA)

(6) USAID Launches ...

country's farmers and herders face," said USAID Mission Director Peter Natello.

Participants included representatives from government and educational institutions such as the Ministry of Higher Education, Agriculture Faculties, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training - Authority, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, the Agriculture Research Institute of Afghanistan, private sector stakeholders, and all donor-funded programs working in the agriculture and education sectors.

In Afghanistan, USAID supports basic science and applied research in agriculture faculties, agriculture and veterinary institutes, and agriculture high schools, by supporting the research of young female and male agriculture students finding solutions to problems that farmers, herders and the private sector face.

USAID's agriculture education project operates throughout the country, with activities in Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad, and Kandahar universities. (PR)

(7) Counterterrorism...

The peace agreement is based on four central pillars, including a withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan.

The discussed agreement would also bar the Taliban from allowing terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and Daesh from using the country as a haven to plan future terrorist attacks.

The report also said that the Daesh has gained control of territory in Afghanistan over the last six months.

While the group's power in Afghanistan remains limited compared with organizations such as the Taliban and al Qaeda, it has continued to challenge Afghan, United States, and coalition forces, it said.

Daesh wants to pose a threat to not only Afghanistan but the US, "which it continuously seeks to target for terrorist activity." Similar to other terror groups like the Haqqani network, al Qaeda, and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, Daesh has sanctuaries on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, making it particularly difficult to counter.

Like the Taliban, Daesh seeks to stage high-profile terrorist attacks, according to the report.

One such attack occurred on April 20, when Daesh operatives attacked Afghanistan's ministry of communications in the capital of Kabul, killing 16 civilians and six Afghan security forces members.

Overall, though, the report said high-profile attacks have decreased over the past year and a half. (Tolonews)

(8) Taliban Force ...

Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, said.

The SCA confirmed that the Taliban had forced it to close 42 of 77 health centers in Wardak. More than 5,700 patients were affected, it said.

The SCA has more than 6,000 Afghan employees operating in 14 Afghan provinces. It was founded in 1980 in response to the Soviet invasion, with the Swedish agency for development cooperation its largest international donor.

"Forcing SCA to close health facilities,

hence denying people to receive medical treatment and health services, is an obvious violation of human rights and international humanitarian law," said Sonny Mansson, SCA country director. Earlier this year, the Taliban ordered the International Committee of the Red Cross and the World Health Organisation to stop operating in areas under their control, citing unspecified "suspicious" actions during vaccination campaigns. (Reuters)

(9) Common People ...

ongoing conflict that killed innocent people. She grumbled the Taliban as well as security forces used civilians to reach their targets.

"I have 20 grandsons aged under 15, they cry when there is fighting and our home's walls have been destroyed several times and we don't know what to do," she added.

Hamidullah Zafarzai, a civil activist, said the security situation in Balkh had deteriorated. He said the Mazar-Shibergan highway was also insecure.

Raihan Sadat, a member of the provincial council, said security operations should be launched at the earliest possible in order to control the situation.

He expressed concern about increasing civilian casualties and said mostly Taliban inflicted harm on common people. Police spokesman Adel Shah Adel said security forces caused heavy casualties to rebels during various operations. He blamed Taliban insurgents for civilian casualties.

But earlier, the Taliban said they did not inflict casualties on civilians.

On Tuesday, the 209th Shaheen Military Corps said they killed 80 Taliban insurgents during separate operations but the group rejected the claim. (Pajhwok)

(10) Miller Says Afghan ...

violence," Miller said. Meanwhile, Gen. Zia blamed the Taliban for most of the civilian casualties.

"Civilian casualties figures have increased and it is from the enemy. You saw that in Juma Bazar in Faryab, the enemy targeted the people with mortars and killed and wounded over a hundred people there," Zia said.

Gen. Sadat said the insurgents' activities around the country has made the people take arms and defend their lives. "We cannot deploy soldiers in every part of the country and in every village for defending and protecting the areas. In the whole world, if you see, people are the main defenders of their areas," Sadat said.

A fresh figure by Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) indicates that 596 civilians were killed and 1,892 others were wounded in clashes between government forces and the Taliban and other attacks by militants in Afghanistan since the beginning of the current solar year which coincides with March 21, 2019.

The CEO of the AIHRC, Musa Mahmoodi, told TOLONews on Monday that 733 of the victims are children who have either been killed or wounded in the conflicts during the period. (Tolonews)

(11) 10 Rebels Killed...

the raid in Yousafkhel district as a big achievement of the security personnel.

In Helmand, 10 insurgents were killed and several others wounded and their hideouts destroyed, an army official said.

Spokesman for the 215th Maiwand Military Corps Abdul Qader Bahadurzai said the operations were conducted in Kajaki and Sangin districts. (Pajhwok)

(12) Shah Walikot ...

Maj. Gen. Sadiq Esa, spokesman for 205th Atal Corps, said the operation was underway in a proper manner and threats had been eliminated after which live has returned to normalcy for common people.

Thirteen landmines had been unearthed and dismantled, he added. (Pajhwok)

(13) Pompeo to Take ...

combat gangs and drug trafficking, saying the secretary will sign a lease extension to let US personnel use the country's international airport.

Pompeo will start his tour in Argentina where he will take part on Friday in a "counterterrorism ministerial" among Western Hemisphere nations.

The ministerial will commemorate the 25th anniversary of a bombing of a Jew-

ish center in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people.

Argentina suspects the attack was carried out by the Lebanese Shiite militant movement Hezbollah, but efforts to question Iran, the group's primary sponsor, have been roiled by political interference and allegations of high-level corruption.

Another US official said that Pompeo would bring the same message that he delivered in March in Beirut -- that the United States "will bring unprecedented pressure to bear on Iran until it ceases all malign behavior including that which is carried out by Hezbollah." In a concrete achievement of the ministerial meeting, the official said Latin American nations were expected to start their own system of blacklisting and imposing sanctions on "terrorists," following the US model. (AFP)

(14) NATO-Linked...

before NATO can effectively respond," the pair asserted. Echoing some Pentagon hawks, they singled out Baltic states and Poland as the first victims of the Russian offensive.

The arguments by reputed pundits might look plausible, but experts interviewed by RT believe that the opposite is true. "NATO did what they could do... to pose a military threat to the Russian Federation," said Willy Wimmer, former vice-president of the OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly.

Likewise, the EU is militarizing itself as it pursues "an old Anglo-Saxon idea" of isolating Russia from the rest of Europe. Like many other Russia-bashing articles, Die Welt's publication wouldn't be complete without claiming that Moscow "purposefully interferes with our democracies." It also complained that NATO can't do anything to tackle it. "Everything that Russia is doing is not recognized in Western circles," commented Peter Schulze, professor at the reputed University of Goettingen.

Moscow "is visibly demonized, this is a tragic situation we're all in," he lamented. Regrettably, these allegations are nothing out of the ordinary as "the majority of German experts are floating the mainstream, and the mainstream [says] that Russia is responsible, Russia is a demon, Russia is an aggressor."

The publication repeatedly made reference to the Russian strategic mindset which allegedly allows for nuclear weapons to be used alongside conventional ones. It also seeks to "exploit the weaknesses of the other side while avoiding being exploited by the enemy."

Such claims are disconnected from reality and make little sense, according to Schulze. "No one wants a nuclear war, not even the die-hard [politicians] in the West or the most conservative elements in the Kremlin," he stated.

Interestingly, the authors didn't deviate much from the official word of NATO. Its latest military strategy decries "challenges in the east and the south" of Europe and cites a commonly hyped "nuclear threat" from Moscow. Obviously, "there's nothing objective in this report" because Krause and Brauss were "just repeating [an agenda] coming out from NATO headquarters and Brussels."

The experts "have a mission to fulfil, namely to come out from time to time with so-called reports [on Russia]," he concluded. The story comes as NATO builds up forces and upgrades its infrastructure in the east of Europe. The bloc has repeatedly staged various war games on its 'eastern flank' focusing on protecting the Baltics and Poland against the elusive "Russian aggression." (RT)

(15) Netanyahu Makes...

Netanyahu aide. Israelis think that "things are good, so why should we change a winning horse," he added.

Just as he is about to cross a milestone, Netanyahu faces perhaps his greatest political challenge yet. After failing to form a parliamentary majority following April elections, the country is holding a repeat vote on Sept. 17. The following month, he faces a hearing with Israel's attorney general, who has recommended indicting Netanyahu on corruption charges. If formal charges are filed, Netanyahu could be forced to step aside.

In contrast to his predecessors, the

69-year-old hasn't left his mark by winning a war or signing a peace accord. He has proudly resisted various peace initiatives and allowed West Bank settlements to flourish. The signature achievements most associated with him, such as combatting Iran's nuclear program, covertly striking weapons shipments to Israel's enemies and building a border fence to stop the flow of African migrants, had begun taking shape before he assumed office.

"His rule has been characterized by conservatism and hesitancy," said opposition lawmaker Tamar Zandberg. "If he is going to be remembered for anything it's going to be his idleness." (AP)

(16) Merkel Heir...

(armed forces) deserve the highest political priority and my full commitment," she said.

"I am aware of my great responsibility and want to live up to it."

Shakuntala Banerjee of ZDF public television said AKK was "stepping up and taking over the most difficult ministry".

"The chances to win big are there -- but the risk of failure is also greater." News weekly Der Spiegel said the defence ministry, rocked by a series of mismanagement allegations on von der Leyen's watch, could prove to be a "minefield" for AKK.

"But because that's the case, the ministry also offers a chance for her to sharpen her profile, in an area where she lacks it: in foreign and security policy -- an area where a chancellor needs some experience," said its commentator Philipp Wittrock.

"The chancellor remains the big goal and the defence ministry can serve as a stage for her to prove herself." (AFP)

(17) Sudanese Military...

are organized. A military leader will head the 11-member council for the first 21 months, followed by a civilian leader for the next 18.

It marks a significant concession by the protesters, who had demanded an immediate transition to civilian rule. The pro-democracy movement would appoint a Cabinet, and the two sides would agree on a legislative body within three months of the start of the transition.

But the two sides have yet to agree on a division of powers between the sovereign council, the Cabinet and the legislative body, which would be enshrined in the constitutional document. That document, which they hope to adopt in talks scheduled for Friday, would also set the terms of military leaders' potential immunity from prosecution.

"This is the big hurdle. Sudan's future after al-Bashir will be defined by this constitutional declaration," said Rasha Awad, editor of the online Sudanese newspaper Altageer.

The military has said the sovereign council should be able to veto appointments to the Cabinet and Cabinet decisions, something the protesters fear would deprive it of any real power.

The protesters have also said that members of the council should be stripped of immunity if they are implicated in last month's crackdown. Some factions, like the Communist Party, have rejected the deal because it does not prescribe an international investigation of the violence. (AP)

(18) No-Deal...

The currency fell again Wednesday to its lowest level against the US dollar in over two years.

"The tougher stance from both Boris Johnson and Jeremy Hunt in terms of their rhetoric on Brexit is clearly weighing on the pound," said market analyst Neil Wilson.

"Make no mistake, this decline in the pound is down to traders pricing in a higher chance of a no-deal exit."

The backstop has proved a key stumbling block in the Brexit process.

The measure would keep open the post-Brexit border between British-ruled Northern Ireland and EU member the Republic of Ireland whatever the outcome of negotiations over the future relationship between London and Brussels.

Johnson announced early in his campaign that he would not sign up to it and would pursue a no-deal Brexit if required, leading his opponent to eventually follow suit. (AFP)